Red Cross Makes Us Feel at Home Over Here, Say Our Fighting Men in England

By Virginia Irwin.

Special Dispatch to The Star.

LONDON.—In January of 1942 the American Red Cross Committee in Great Britain received a cable from its national headquarters in Washington, D. C., reading: "American Red Cross has been designated by Chief of Staff the official agency for the welfare and recreation of troops serving overseas."

From this beachhead, in two short years, the American Red Cross in Great Britain has established operations throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain, from John O'Groats to Lands End and from Yarmouth to Brides Bay. In leave areas and port towns, in military hospitals, on military and naval reservations, American Red Cross installations are providing for the welfare and recreational needs of the United States forces in Great Britain. No matter where an American soldier finds himself in the British Isles—with an infantry outfit in Northern Ireland, in an evacuation hospital under tents in South Wales, in a rest home for war-weary flying men on the west coast, or on an isolated bomber base in East Anglia—Red Cross facilities are now at his elbow.

In March of 1942, only two months after the Red Cross was designated as the official agency for the welfare and recreation of American troops serving overseas, the first Red Cross unit of trained medical, social and welfare workers moved, at the Army's request, into a United States Army station hospital. Now, less than two years later, American personnel in Red Cross hospital service numbers 325 and are serving with 80 hospital units. And requests from the Army for additional personnel to serve with newly established units continue to outdistance the available number of trained personnel.

Hospital Service

In a hospital under tents in South Wales your correspondent lived for two weeks with two Red Cross girls assigned to that hospital. While one handled the medical-social problems and conferred with the men in the tent wards on their various worries, the other, a Red Cross recreation worker did her best to bring some sort of recreation to the boys confined to their beds.

The Red Cross tent, set up in the exact center of the tent reservation by order of the colonel commanding the unit, was called "Grand Central Station" by the patients who were able to be up and about. In this tent, crowded from dawn to dark by ambulatory patients, the boys found their only enjoyment in the Army tent hospital. There was boogie-woogie on the Victrola, there were magazines and hometown papers for leisurely reading, writing materials for letters to the folks back home.

"The only trouble with the place is that usually it's so crowded the tent flaps bulge," one recuperating private told this correspondent happily. "But, gee! It's a great place. Sort of makes you forget your aches and pains to hear some boogie and see some American girls. The girls will do anything for you, too. I was worried about my mother and while I was still in bed they got the Red Cross back home to find out about her. Seemed like the day they got word back that mom was all right and staying with my married sister I began to get well in a hurry."

In the Field

Almost simultaneously with the inauguration of Red Cross service in military hospitals, the field service program of the American Red Cross came into being in March of 1942, with the arrival of United States troops in Northern Ireland.

From a handful of American Red Cross field directors serving as a medium of communication in personal welfare problems between the soldier and his family back home, the number of American men now serving as field directors with the American Red Cross has grown to 215.

Problems brought to the American Red Cross field director by men in the forces are endless. It is to him that men come when they need a small loan to be able to take advantage of a three-day pass; to him they bring their questions about allotments; their requests to trace wives or sweethearts who have long since quit writing. Few are the personal problems of the men in service that do not at some time or other pass over a field director's desk.

In a Fleetclub, operated by the American Red Cross, music gives our sailors new spirit. These lads are forgetting for awhile that they're at war.
—Red Cross Photo.

Red Cross Clubs

Aside from handling the personal welfare problems of the men in the armed forces, the field director is also responsible for the smooth functioning of whatever Red Cross clubs may be established in his district. These clubs may be aeroclubs, established on military reservations occupied by the United States Army Air Forces; camp clubs, installations on military reservations occupied by United States forces other than the air force; fleet clubs, Red Cross installations on naval reservations or in port towns, or service clubs, clubs which are established in leave area towns or in towns near military reservations.

Aeroclubs Are Popular

Because a bomber or a fighter base must, by its very nature, often be located in an isolated spot, the aeroclub on a military reservation occupied by the United States Army Air Force is the GI's "home away from home." At the aeroclub in the evening after he's finished his bombing mission for the day, or, if he is a member of the ground crew, completed his sometimes thankless labors, the boy in our Air Force sits around with his buddies, drinks American coffee and eats American sandwiches.

In the aeroclub he can listen to the radio, or play the victrola; he can shoot pool, or darts, or play ping pong, or write letters. Understaffed, because of shortage in personnel, an aeroclub is usually presided over by two American girls, responsible not only for the actual running of the club itself, but for a recreation program which provides the only diversion for men on the base usually located miles from the nearest town and out of reach of anything that even resembles fun.

Your correspondent, who not long ago completed a two-month tour of duty as director of one of the largest aeroclubs in the ETO, was told by a G-I who came regularly to the club each evening: "You don't know what a difference it has made on this base since this club was opened. Before we didn't have a thing to do except lay in our bunks in the evening and try to read by a dim bulb. You don't mind going back to your Nisscen hut at night if you've got some music ringing in your ears. Don't seem like so long between passes, either, when you've got some place to visit evenings on the base."

There are now 67 American Red Cross aeroclubs in operation; 39 more will be opened within 60 days. Soon also there will be a total of 15 camp clubs and 7 fleet clubs in operation, all modeled along the lines of the aeroclub, the "home away from home" for the man in the armed forces.

Sleeping Facilities

Of the total of 140 service clubs now in operation in leave-area towns or in towns near military reservations, 96 have sleeping facilities. In our service clubs open at the present time—38 more are nearing completion—there are approximately 27,200 beds and these clubs have been known to accommodate 150,421 men within the course of a week.

As the numbers of our forces grow in the British Isles, the Red Cross eventually hopes to reach a total of between 30,000 and 40,000 beds, in service clubs and in dormitories adjacent to the clubs. Daily meal capacity is now well over 200,700 meals a day. During week ends, especially, Red Cross service clubs are taxed to capacity. During the week ending December 25, 1943, Red Cross service clubs slept nearly 124,450 members of our armed forces and served 326,663 main meals and 940,243 snacks.

Service clubs, it should be borne in mind, are used for eating purposes by greater numbers of men than use them for sleeping, since many of the men are located near a town where they can drop in and out of the Red Cross club on an hourly or longer absence from the military unit to which they are attached.

"The service club is open to the men of our forces 24 hours a day," one service club director explained, "and they always want something to eat. It isn't that they aren't well fed by the Army. But being able to get a snack when they want it somehow makes them feel at home."

Officers' Clubs

Primarily, the entire welfare and recreation program of the American Red Cross in Great Britain is aimed at the enlisted men of our forces, but included in the 140 service clubs now operating are several clubs for officers. There are also a number of service clubs located near large concentrations of Negro troops, staffed by American Negro personnel. For the women serving with our forces, there is a club in London for enlisted WACS and a women's officers' club with sleeping accommodations for 200 Army nurses, WACS, ferry pilots and American Red Cross personnel on leave in London. A second club for woman officers has just been opened at a seaside resort in the south of England, where woman officers can go for rest or convalescence.

On August 17, 1943, the American Red Cross was asked to participate in the direction of USAAF rest homes in Great Britain. With the aid of American Red Cross personnel, these rest homes attempt to provide an American type of home with an atmosphere of informality where pilots can relax completely in surroundings which have the approval of Capt. David Wright, chief psychiatric consultant for the 8th Air Force.

Said Capt. Wright recently: "The American Red Cross in their rest home operation is playing the key role in the biggest job of preventative medicine in the ETO."

Rest Homes

In these rest homes—four of which are open at the present time—the men who fly and man the crews of our bombers and fighters rest up between strenuous missions, recuperate after minor illnesses. Often a few days in one of these rest homes, so reminiscent of their own back home, means the difference between a man cracking up or going back on the job to complete his tour of missions over enemy territory with his nerve intact.

To reach American troops which are widely dispersed in isolated sections, the American Red Cross in October of 1942 inaugurated a clubmobile service. Each clubmobile is a specially constructed mobile unit, staffed by American girls who serve doughnuts and coffee on regular visits to these isolated bases and stations not served by permanent clubs. A regular, scheduled route is established so that a clubmobile reaches isolated units at regular intervals. Where possible, moving pictures, games and other forms of recreation are arranged for the troops.

Clubmobile Canteens

Canteen service at docks and important railway junctions is another activity included in the program of the clubmoble department of the American Red Cross. The need for dispensing some type of light refreshment such as coffee, doughnuts and cigarettes to embarking or debarking troops at docks and to members of the armed forces at important railway junctions while troops await train facilities, is assuming increasing proportions.

The canteen division of the clubmobile department has recently been created to work out all necessary arrangements for existing and future miscellaneous canteen service and also under clubmobile department come the newly established doughnut dugouts in towns where other Red Cross facilities are not available. A doughnut dugout is usually a small shop converted into a lounge with a service bar serving coffee and donuts. When space permits there are writing rooms, lavatory facilities and other accommodations. In most instances donut dugouts are located in Army training areas or maneuver sectors. At the present time only eight are in operaton, but under existing plans 61 more will be opened shortly.

In January of 1943, the first Red Cross cinemobile, a mobile cinema unit serving Red Cross installations for American troops, was put into operation. At the present time, there are three cinemobile units serving the London clubs and 17 serving the various Red Cross clubs scattered throughout the English provinces.

Of the total American personnel of 1,484 now serving in various capacities in the American Red Cross program for the welfare and recreation of our troops serving in Great Britain, 338 are men, 1,146 are women. Included in this total are 66 Negro American personnel.

In two short years the welfare and recreation program of the American Red Cross in Great Britain has grown from a handful of field directors serving as a medium of communication between the soldier and his famly and another handful of hospital medical-social and recreation workers, to a giant organization within the reach of practically every American soldier stationed in the British Isles.

A Home Away From Home

In aeroclubs on bomber and fighter bases American boys have their "home away from home"; in Red Cross service clubs in English towns American boys sleep and eat in a homelike atmosphere while spending their well-earned furloughs from the Army; in rest homes, pilots and waist gunners and bombardiers recuperate from their bombing missions over enemy territory; in recreation tents set up with tent evacuation hospitals American boys discuss their personal problems with Red Cross medical-social workers and find relaxation in programs planned by Red Cross hospital recreation workers.

Even the boys in the most isolated spots find the Red Cross at their elbows with the regular visits of the Red Cross clubmobile serving doughnuts and coffee.

And still the program grows, as the United States Army continues its requests for American Red Cross installations designed for the welfare and recreation of our armed forces.

"Sort of makes you forget your aches and pains to hear some boogie and see some American girls."

The "Clubmobile," traveling Red Cross Club on wheels, is a familiar sight to American soldiers. The unit, manned by a team of two or three Red Cross workers, travels from one field camp to another, carrying hot coffee, doughnuts, a record player, books and miscellaneous items which are dear to the heart of American boys fighting overseas. Here, volunteer workers are shown serving some of the soldiers stationed in England.
—Red Cross Photo by Toni Frissell.

Volunteer Training Unit Here Is Without Parallel

By Erwin Brown.

The thousands of Red Cross workers serving with America's armed forces at home and abroad constantly are winning new acclaim from both servicemen and civilians. American University, in the suburbs of Washington, has been the training school for these important volunteers, and in their classes here they have learned morale-building techniques which are being put to good use at military and naval camps and bases from Iceland to the Southwest Pacific and from Alaska to Australia.

The personnel training unit at American University is the only one in the Nation. From it have gone the workers who now staff the 181 Red Cross service clubs in 18 war areas around the globe wherever our fighting forces are stationed.

The corps of workers was established in June, 1941, when in answer to the requests of the armed forces the Red Cross set up the "Services to the Armed Forces," now referred to as the SAF.

At American University.

The school is not a part of American University, although located on its campus. In June, 1942, as the increasing demand for trained workers made larger training classes necessary, the Red Cross arranged with the university to occupy part of its facilities. The school now is carried on in Hurst Hall (the Red Cross uses only the first and second floors), Women's Residence Hall, Hamilton House and the gymnasium. All instruction is under the exclusive direction and supervision of the Red Cross. Ferdinand V. Grayson heads the unit.

Previously the training work had been carried on at national headquarters in Washington. The first SAF workers merely visited around the offices, receiving informal instruction and suggestions. As the groups gradually increased in size, it became necessary to formalize the orientation program to provide for classroom methods of instruction.

By November, 1942, the SAF personnel training unit took shape to the extent that there were four distinct divisions within the unit, each on the basis of the service they represented. They were: Camp service training section, hospital service training section, club and recreation training service and home service training section. In July, 1943, the basic recreation training school became a part of the training unit.

Classes Grew Larger.

Classes were held at national headquarters until June, 1942, when, because of the size of the classes, it was imperative to have more adequate quarters. The training unit was housed on the second floor of the Printcraft Building, 930 H street N.W., until June 14, 1943, when the unit was moved to the campus of American University.

The present course of instruction normally would require several months, but the demand for more and more workers has speeded up the program until trainees are studying "all out" to get through in only a few weeks. The length of their instruction varies with the specialized work for which they are preparing.

Wear Uniforms.

An average of 180 men and women—college professors, teachers, ministers, social workers, musicians, entertainers, lawyers and sucessful business men and women—graduate each week. They study Red Cross organization, staff responsibilities in camp, hospital and club services, the philosophy of the service, policies, procedures, co-operation with other services in and out of Red Cross, office routine, military orientation and the application of professional skills to service with the armed forces overseas.

The trainees receive a Red Cross uniform, complete with all essentials, the same "G. I." immunization given to servicemen, including typhus, tetanus, smallpox, typhoid and yellow fever, at the Army Dispensary in the Pentagon Building and have their blood typed. They are instructed in preventive medicine and personal health. They take physical training to "harden up."

Only women students reside at the university. Men are housed in nearby hotels and other private quarters contracted for by the Red Cross. There is no restriction on the off-duty hours of the men, but women in the dormitory, where they are lodged two or three to a room, must be in by 1 a.m.

Military Assignment.

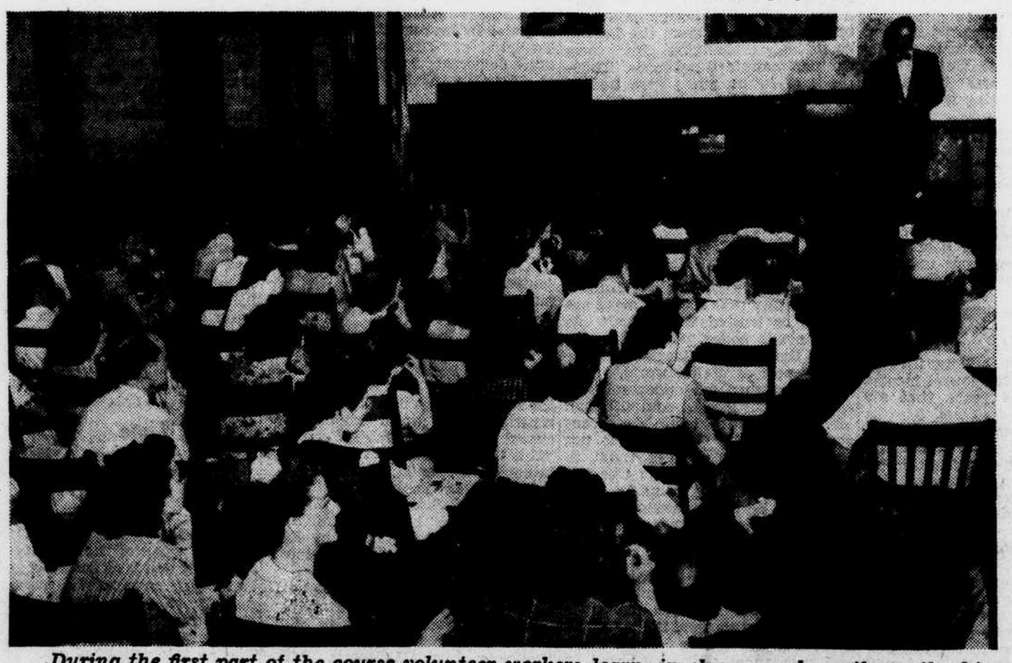
As the course of training progresses students are given more and more privileges. After their first week they are eligible to contribute to the Trainee News, a mimeographed weekly paper published by the students. They may not wear their uniforms to class until the final week of training, when they have attained the proficiency of skilled workers.

On completion of their training period they are assigned to nearby military establishments or to headquarters work, on an "alert" basis awaiting orders for the overseas service all eagerly anticipate.

When the day comes for them to leave Washington to assume their full-time duties the following lines from their handbook become at last a living reality:

"You are now working for the Red Cross, an auxiliary to the armed forces of the United States. In a real sense you are working for the American people, for Red Cross is the American people. You are going to play a vital part in the fight for freedom, for you will be right behind the fighting men wherever they are. To do this job well, you must be alert, resourceful and willing to be a member of the team.

"To do this job well you must bring to it a sense of dedication. Above all you must be loyal to the Red Cross, not alone nor most importantly because it pays your salary, but far more because it sums up the ideals of service and democracy for which we are fighting, and because Red Cross has always stood for these things in the eyes of the American people."



During the first part of the course volunteer workers learn, in classes such as these, the history, purpose and organization of the Red Cross. This is followed by training which outlines their jobs with the armed forces.

T-A-S Magic Speeds War-Plant Output

By Robert J. Lewis.

Rejections due to rust are cutting down the output of smoke-signal canisters for the Marines—and the California firm making them must find a way out or give the Japs a break in the Pacific.

The manager of a Minneapolis firm turning out ammunition lockers for Coast Guard ships is in a dither because he can't find a satisfactory cement to make rubber cleave to galvanized iron—and the answer must be found quickly to meet his war-imposed timetable.

Soldiers' cots are falling apart under the dank jungle moisture of the tropics and the Army substitutes a mildew-proofed canvas. The heavier goods causes sewing-machine needles to heat up and break in one Atlanta factory and production drops from 1,100 a day to less than 200.

Simple problems for a big corporation, perhaps. Yet they are among hundreds which have seriously perplexed small businessmen within the last few weeks. Without expensive laboratories or research facilities to solve them, the small manufacturers stood to lose time, money and precious production.

A Bold, New Experiment

But each one received a quick solution—at a cost of only a postage stamp or a telephone call. The bold new experiment by which these plants and hundreds of others are being helped to speed the output of war material and essential civilian goods is writing an exciting chapter in the history of scientific and industrial co-operation in the United States.

The Technical Advisory Service, through which this magic is performed, is a division of Chairman Maury Maverick's Smaller War Plants Corp., a Government agency set up under Public Law 603. Into the 96 field offices of the TAS scattered from Seattle to Atlanta are beginning to flow the myriad technical and research questions plaguing small businessmen. Through 14 regional offices and the central office here in the Capital those queries are being routed to the country's top industrial, research and scientific brains.

In as short a time as three days, answers are returned and the small plants are ready to tackle their jobs anew—this time on a virtual par with the large corporation which may spend millions a year on research.

How It Started

The TAS stems from an effort launched back in 1937 by Bert H. White, vice president in charge of investments of Buffalo's Liberty Bank. It was White who as a lieutenant colonel in the Army Air Forces was "borrowed" by SWPC to set up the Technical Advisory Service.

During lean years, White had seen many small plants wither on the bough for lack of scientific knowledge to keep pace with developments in their field. Deciding to do something about it, he formed a "technological clearing house" which the bank called Research Advisory Service.

He enlisted the co-operation of about 800 industrial research laboratories here and abroad which agreed to flex their muscles to help him lick the problems besetting the bank's clients. When an industrial headache developed, it was rushed along to laboratories and experts most likely to come through with the answers. Information received was then relayed to the manufacturer without charge.

Former Representative Maury Maverick.
—Harris & Ewing Photo.

"It was as simple as ABC," Mr. Maverick said. "And it wasn't only simple—it worked."

Set up in the summer of 1942 to mobilize small business for war production, the Smaller War Plants Corp. soon found that getting contracts for small plants and supplying cash for their conversion was not enough. Many manufacturers entered technological blind alleys on their new assignments, and began to clamor for help.

To fill the breach, SWPC called in Bert White and assigned him to set up the Technical Advisory Service. Col. White visited each of the 14 regional SWPC offices and handpicked "the best man in the shop" for training as a TAS consultant.

Opening classes at the University of Buffalo, he gave an intensive six-week course to those 14 men, plus two others. Lowell L. Henkel, a Midwest chemical and metallurgical engineer with long experience in private industry who heads the central office in Washington, also went to Buffalo to get the benefit of White's "know-how."

In Fourteen Cities

Within three months of the time it started to function, TAS had received more than 1,000 requests for information—running the gamut from comparatively simple problems to complex ones having six or eight parts. Today there is a consultant in 14 cities and the program is being swiftly expanded.

The service so far is known mainly to manufacturers in touch with SWPC field offices, but plans are under way for a Nation-wide campaign to explain it to every small manufacturer. According to the last census, 168,000 plants employing 100 or fewer employes accounted for one of every three workers in the United States. Hitherto small manufacturers, on whom so large a part of the working population depends, were left without a central source of information on the world's fast-paced technological developments.

Meanwhile TAS is making available to small industry the 45,000 patents and patent applications seized by the alien property custodian. Licenses will be issued on a royalty-free basis for a $15 fee. The patents now are being screened to select those which appear to be most suitable for small-industry use. They cover inventions in every field and some of the finest foreign scientific achievements.

Daily Inquiries

Scores of inquiries are received by the TAS field offices daily. The growing files are stuffed with the drama and color which spell out the story behind exciting production figures.

Take the case of the magnesium bomb bottleneck. The Army not long ago let contracts for magnesium bombs to several plants in the Far West. Those plants, in turn, ordered special drills and cutters from a small machine-tool plant nearby. The small plant had no experience in this type of work, turned out tools which slowed up bomb production. A TAS symposium obtained from all the few authorities in the country on the subject told the firm what steels to use and at what clearance angles to grind them. That advice saved the small plant its contract and sent bomb output skyrocketing.

Then there's the case of the West Coast shipyard turning out small boats for the Navy. It was having trouble with lumber cracking in dry kilns. Information speeded to the firm by TAS not only answered the problem but revealed how boat ribs could be twisted and bent like steel by the application of urea—a compound of which the firm had not known. The company stepped up its output of boats for the Navy and greatly reduced its losses of lumber. The episode caused so much interest that another boat-building company, a lumber mill and a national paint manufacturer requested the same report.

Not all the problems are linked to war work. The TAS consultant in the Philadelphia region cites the case of the owner of a chinchilla ranch who was rapidly losing his shirt along with his stock of the tiny animals valued at $1,300 apiece. Through information from TAS, he found a bacterial killer and saved his chinchillas for a lusher fate.

The small manufacturer in a production jam who wants to test the mettle of the TAS has only to get in touch with the nearest SWPC field office and describe his problem.

The manufacturer's inquiry, designated only by a number, is then forwarded by the TAS consultant to the best available sources of information.

The United States has a vast reservoir of nonconfidential technical information that is used by only a fraction of the manufacturers who need it, TAS officials point out. As the time for reconversion to peacetime production approaches, there will be even greater reason to make such information readily

(Continued on Page C-5.)